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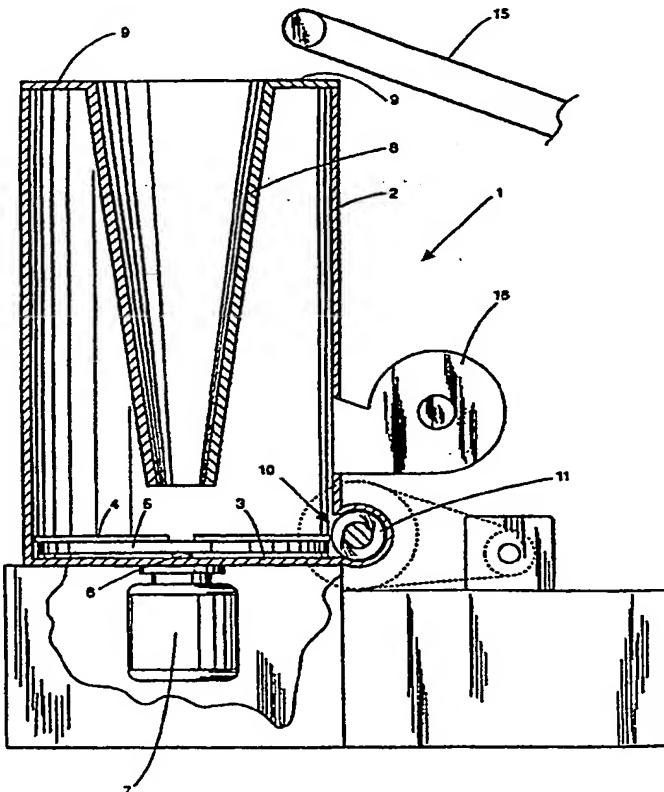
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## (54) Title: PLASTIC RECYCLER

## (57) Abstract

The recycling of a mixture of discarded plastic materials of thermosetting and thermoplastic materials by feeding shredded plastics materials into a vertical casing. Rapidly rotatable chopping blades at the bottom of the casing shred and comminute the material which remains in the casing till the heat developed forms a viscous mass which is extruded from the casing into useable products such as posts and rails.



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## PLASTIC RECYCLER

This invention relates to a method and machine for the recycling of plastic waste materials.

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

- 5    Items manufactured from plastic materials are very widely used throughout the world and the tendency appears to be that many forms of plastics material will be more extensively used in the future. However it is well known that many plastic materials are not bio-degradable and that great problems exist in the disposal of such materials. Often hollow plastic articles are themselves
- 10   deposited in disposal areas, and this assists in producing the large volume of waste which is quickly filling the available disposal areas.

Various attempts have been made in an attempt to overcome the problem, ranging from simply crushing the articles to occupy less volume in the land fill or disposal area, to attempts to recycle the plastic for further use. However as far as is known, in the recycling of plastic material, the plastic material has to be manually sorted into the various types of plastic, often broadly into thermoplastic material and thermosetting material. However it is often necessary to sort these materials into more specific groups. The thermoplastic materials can be reheated and remoulded into suitable shapes or articles, while the thermosetting materials are usually shredded or granulated for further processing which entails the addition of a suitable binder to bind the particles together in either an extruder or mould.

Thus the materials have to be manually sorted, and while most plastic articles have a code number printed or embossed thereon, this has first to be located and the material sorted by this number. Error can occur and such errors can be disastrous resulting in the blockage or failure of the processing machine and the consequent complete dismantling of the processing machine so that the offending material can be removed, often by manually chipping away the material. Also in known recycling methods it is often necessary for any labels to be first removed, and this task is placed on the person discarding the article, such as the householder.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

One known apparatus for the recycling of thermoplastic material is shown in US 4,222,748 which comprises a vertical cylindrical container adapted to be charged with thermoplastic material from the top. At the bottom of the

5      container is a rotatable member with a plurality of knives to rotate about the axis of the container. The material is discharged through an opening in the wall of the container into a screw extruder. The material is disintegrated and blended and softened before being fed into the plasticising screw extruder.

10     However as disclosed this apparatus is limited in use to thermoplastic materials.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of this invention to overcome one or more of the above disadvantages of the known prior art, and to provide a method and apparatus where it is not necessary to manually sort the plastic material into different

15    types.

- A further object of the invention is to provide a machine for recycling plastic material which will accept a mixture of plastic materials, including thermoplastic and thermosetting materials without the necessity of pre-sorting the material.
- 20    Thus there is provided according to one form of the invention a process for recycling plastic materials including the steps of shredding and/or pulverising a mixture of plastic materials containing such that at least some of the plastic material is at least softened whereby on admixture the softened material binds the remaining shredded and/or pulverised material together.
- 25    In a further form of the invention there is provided a process of recycling a mixture of plastics materials, said method including the steps of feeding a mixture of plastic material into a pulveriser mixing machine having a plurality of shredding mixing blades rotatable about a vertical axis in a cylindrical casing, an opening in the wall of the casing at about the level of the rotatable
- 30    blades, said opening leading to an auger in a tube positioned tangentially to the casing, the method including the steps of shredding and pulverising the material by rotating the blades at a rotational speed sufficient to shred and

pulverise the material, the plastics material being heated by friction whereby when heated to a plastic condition is expelled through the opening into the auger.

- Preferably the auger is an extruder, and the method includes the steps of  
5 regulating the temperature of the extruding material by heaters positioned on and in relation to the extruder.

Preferably also the temperature of the material in the pulverising mixing machine is regulated by controlling the rate of addition of plastics material into the cylindrical casing.

#### 10 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In order to more fully describe the invention reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings in which:-

- FIG 1 is a side view of one form of the invention;  
FIG 2 is a plan view showing the arrangement of the auger; and  
15 FIG 3 is a plan view partly in section of the shredder and auger.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

- In a preferred form of the invention the apparatus 1 comprises a vertical cylindrical casing 2 detachably attached to a horizontal base 3. Immediately above the base 3 there is positioned a plurality of blades 4 on a rotatable disc  
20 5 connected to a drive shaft 6 extending through the base 3, the drive shaft being driven by an electric motor 7. In alternate form the rotatable disc may be dispensed with, the blades being connected directly to the shaft 6. The blades maybe of any desired shape but as shown are generally radial and being curved in the direction of rotation to thus provide a shredding, pulverising, 25 mixing action of the material fed into the casing.

The casing 2 is open at the top to permit the mixture of plastic material to be charged into the casing. In order to ensure that the material during operation is not ejected out of the top of the casing, and to ensure that the material is fed

directly onto the blades without bridging in the casing, there is provided a central charging chute 8 extending from the top of the casing downwards to terminate above the rotating blades. The annular area at the top of the casing between the charging chute and the casing is closed by an annular cover 9 attached to the charging chute 8. The cover 9 and charging chute 8 can be lifted and removed from the casing for maintenance and cleaning purposes if and when required.

In this way the material is charged into the centre area of the blades, and when thrown out centrifugally, even it is thrown up by the blades, this will be away from the centre of the blades into the annular space between the casing and the charging chute.

An opening 10 is provided in the wall of the casing for the discharge of the plastic material after processing. The opening is positioned in the side of the casing at about the level of the blades, the opening leading to an auger or extruder screw 11 positioned tangentially to the casing. The extruder screw 11 operates in a tube 12, the screw being driven by an electric motor through a reduction gearing. This may be via a reduction gear box, or by a belt drive. Preferably there are means to vary the speed of the screw, and preferably this is via a variable speed electric motor, although a variable speed reduction gear box can be used.

The end of the extruder tube 12 has attached thereto a diverter valve 13 so that the processed material can be selectively directed to either of two outlets. The outlets may be connected to a mould and in one example the outlets are connected in turn to a tubular mould so that the processed material produces cylindrical, square or rectangular posts, rods or rails. In other examples the material is collected in moulds and by pressure various shaped objects can be formed, bricks, rings, discs and the like.

To control the temperature of the plastics material during the extrusion, in order to maintain the extruded temperature, heating elements 14 can be positioned along the extruder tube and the outlets from the diverter valve. These heaters can be thermostatically controlled so that they only operate as desired. The material is preferably fed into the loading chute via a belt conveyor 15, the material preferably being shredded, chopped or divided into smaller pieces before loading onto the conveyor.

The temperature at which the material is extruded can be in the range of 100°C to 200°C, the preferred temperature being in the order of 140°C. If the temperature is too high the processed material can be too fluid, and also the temperature must be below the temperature at which plastic materials can

5 decompose and give off noxious gases. In order to assist in controlling the temperature, a fan 16 has its outlet connected to the bottom of the casing above the opening to the screw conveyor. Thus the fan preferably is temperature controlled so that it only becomes operative when the temperature of the processed material exceeds an upper limit in the order of

10 160°C.

It is preferred that the extruder screw be between 500 to 1500mm, the ideal length being 1000mm. The screw is to be of a length such that the material is suitably compressed, but if the length exceeds 1500mm the power and torque required can be excessive resulting in power losses and possible damage to

15 the extruder screw and drive.

In operation the belt conveyor is operated to charge a quantity of material into the casing. The belt conveyor is then stopped, the heaters on the tube and diverter valve be turned on and the motor driving the blades in the casing be activated. The screw extruder is not driven at this stage. The degree of

20 processing of the materials in the casing is monitored. This is achieved by noting the load on the blades on the disc as indicated by the current drawn by the driving motor. As the material is processed, the softened material begins mixing with the finely comminuted material and the material becomes more viscous thus creating a load on the blades and motor. This increase on the

25 load is indicated by the current flow to the motor and when this reaches a desired level, the extruding screw is driven. The feeding conveyor can also be controlled by the load on the blades, so that it is actuated to add more material when the load is high. Thus the rate of feeding of the material is determined by the condition of the material being processed in the casing.

30 It is preferred that the casing diameter be in the range of 300mm to 2000mm and the rotor and blades are driven in a speed range of 900 to 2400 RPM, preferably 1480 RPM whereby the material is shredded and pulverised, and during this operation the frictional forces of the shredding and pulverising of the material inside the casing develops heat sufficient to soften the

35 thermoplastic material to the extent that it binds the finely comminuted other

plastic materials into a soft mouldable and workable mass. It appears that the thermoplastic material shrinks or contracts and becomes soft and so is in a condition to bind the other finely commuted material into a coherent mass.

- 5 The speed of the rotor and blades can be varied if desired, and also  
preferably the speed of the screw conveyor extruder screw is variable to be  
adjusted to the rate of processing of the material in the casing.

- The product which emerges from the extruder screw has a consistency of putty  
or workable clay, and so can be moulded, pressed or otherwise formed into  
any desired shape. On cooling the product is solid, hard, has strength against  
10 breakage. As an example it is suitable for the manufacture of fence posts,  
building bricks, and so is suitable for the manufacture of a large range of  
products.

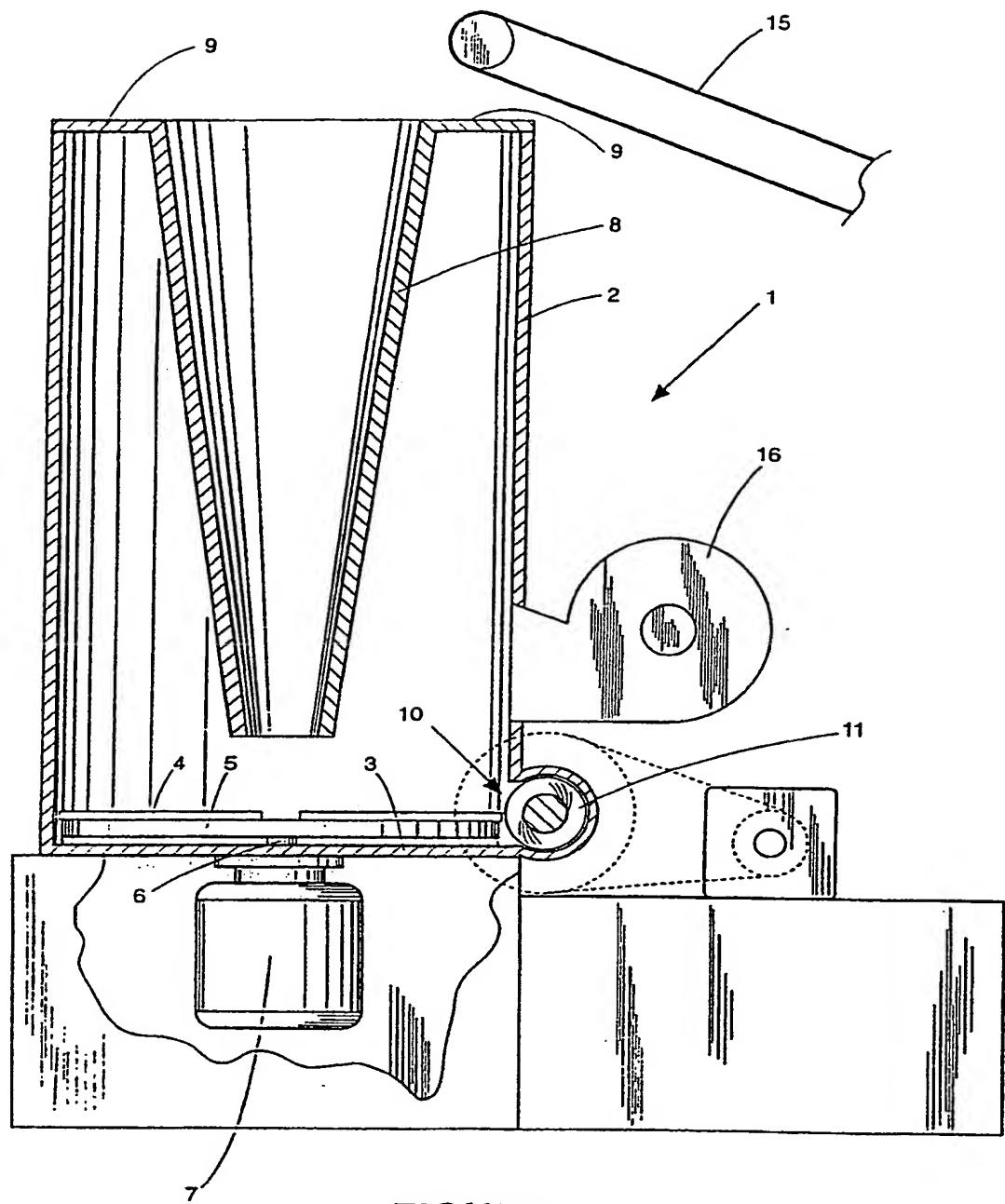
- Although one form of the invention has been described in some detail it is to  
be realised that the invention is not to be limited thereto, but can include  
15 variations falling within the spirit and scope of the invention.

CLAIMS:

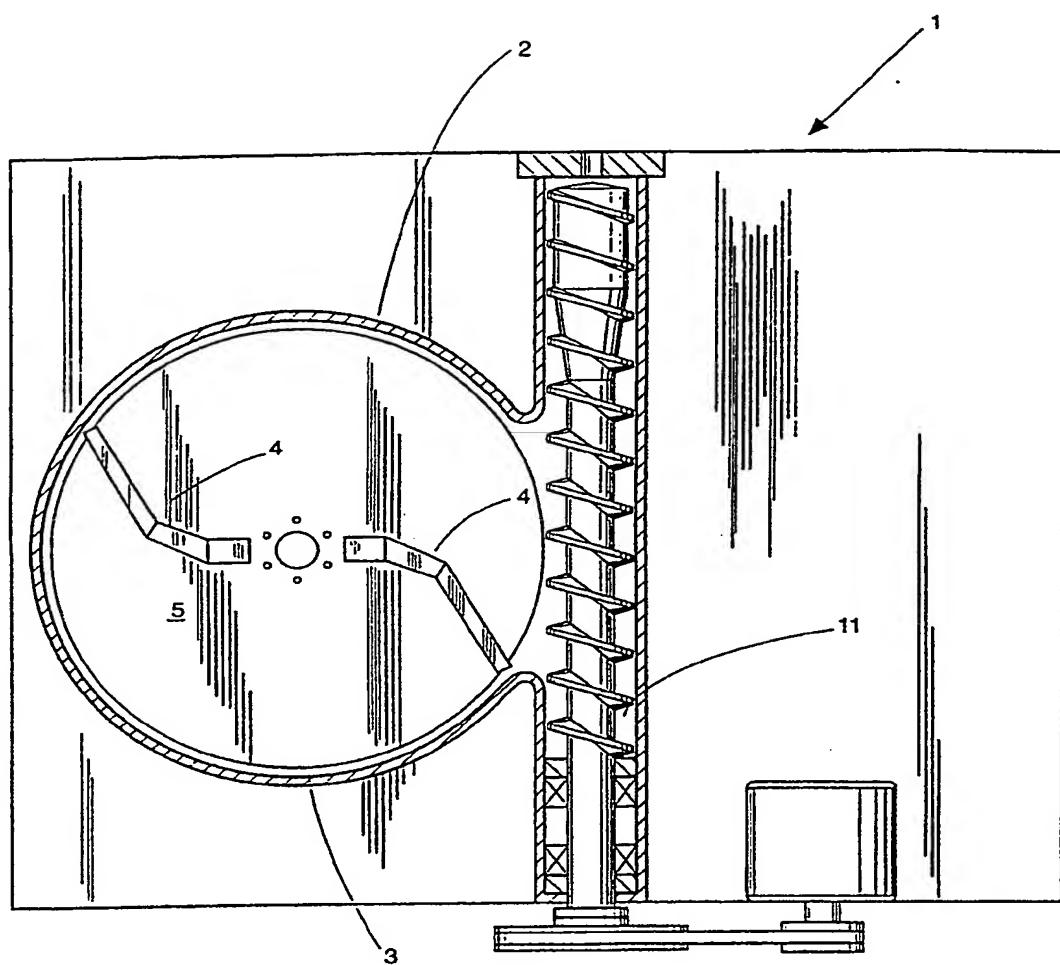
1. A process for recycling plastic materials including the steps of shredding and/or pulverising a mixture of plastic materials containing such that at least some of the plastic material is at least softened whereby on admixture the softened material binds the remaining shredded and/or pulverised material together.
2. A method of recycling a mixture of plastics materials, said method including the steps of feeding a mixture of plastic material into a pulveriser mixing machine having a plurality of shredding mixing blades rotatable about a vertical axis in a cylindrical casing, an opening in the wall of the casing at 10 about the level of the rotatable blades, said opening leading to an auger in a tube positioned tangentially to the casing, the method including the steps of shredding and pulverising the material by rotating the blades at a rotational speed sufficient to shred and pulverise the material, the plastics material being heated by friction whereby when heated to a plastic condition is 15 expelled through the opening into the auger.
3. A method of recycling a mixture of plastics materials, said method including the steps of feeding a mixture of plastic material into a pulveriser mixing machine having a plurality of shredding mixing blades rotatable about a vertical axis in a cylindrical casing, an opening in the wall of the casing at 20 about the level of the rotatable blades, said opening leading to an extruding auger in a tube positioned tangentially to the casing, the method including the steps of shredding and pulverising the material by rotating the blades at a rotational speed sufficient to shred and pulverise the material and for a sufficient time to develop heat whereby portions of the plastics materials are 25 softened sufficiently to bind the comminuted and pulverised material into a plastic mass and fed through the opening into the extruding auger.
4. A method of recycling plastics materials as defined in claim 3, including the step of regulating the temperature of the extruding material by heaters positioned on and in relation to the extruder.
- 30 5. A method of recycling plastics material as defined in claim 3 including the step of chopping or shredding material to be recycled and feeding the material into the casing by means of a conveyor.

6. A method as defined in claim 5 wherein the processing of the material in the cylindrical casing is regulated by controlling the rate of addition of plastics material into the cylindrical casing.
7. A method as defined in claim 3 including the step of controlling the temperature within the cylindrical casing by blowing air into the casing over the material being processed.

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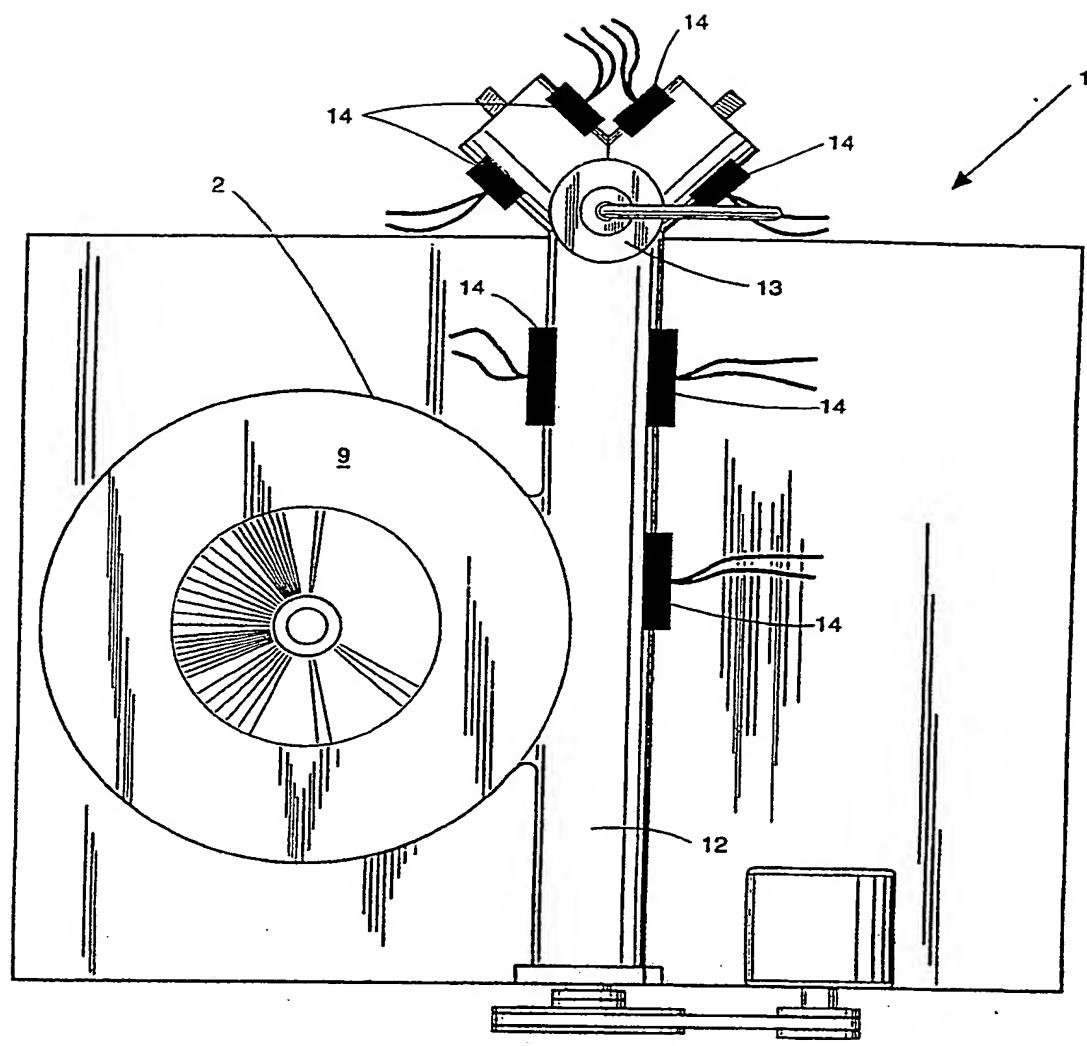


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**FIGURE 2**

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**FIGURE 3**

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/AU 95/00342

## A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int. Cl.<sup>6</sup> B29B 17/00, B02C 18/44 //B29B 7/42

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC B29B 17/00, B29C 29/00, B02C 18/44

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched  
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## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to Claim No.
X	US 4222728 A (BACHER et al.) 16 September 1980 whole document	1-7
X	GB 1190395 A (FELLNER & ZIEGLER GMBH) 6 May 1970 whole document	1
X	WO 92/18312 A (MARIANI CINZIA LICIA D.I.) 29 October 1992 whole document	1
X	EP 0578603 A (WUORELA) 12 January 1994 whole document	1

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

4 August 1995

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**INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT**

International application No.

PCT/AU 95/00342

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Patent Document Cited in Search Report	Patent Family Member		
US,A 4222728	AT,B, 354076 GB,B2, 2024043 NL,B, 187000	BR,A, 7901126 IT,A, 1111137	FR,B1, 2418707 JP,A2, 54124062
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